

Message Text

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S/S SESTEINER

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 285718

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 285781 ACTION TEL AVIV DTD 20 NOV 76.

QTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 285781

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PFOR, US, IS

SUBJECT: OPENING OF PLO INFORMATION OFFICE IN WASHINGTON

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1. ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON CALLED ISRAELI MINISTER

BAR-ON NOVEMBER 19 TO PROVIDE HIM INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US OF PLO DESIRE TO OPEN INFORMATION OFFICE IN WASHINGTON. BAR-ON INDICATED THAT HE HAD HEARD REPORTS TO THIS EFFECT AND WANTED TO QUERY DEPARTMENT ABOUT THEM.

2. ATHERTON SAID THAT TWO INDIVIDUALS CLAIMING TO BE PLO REPRESENTATIVES ARRIVED IN THE U.S. LAST WEEK. USG DID NOT HAVE ANY ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR ARRIVAL NOR PURPOSES FOR THEIR TRIP. AT END OF LAST WEEK WE HAD RECEIVED NUMBER OF CALLS FROM PRIVATE AMERICANS WITH SPECIAL INTEREST IN MIDDLE EAST MATTERS WHO SAID THAT THEY HAD MET THESE PLO REPRESENTATIVES. PLO REPS SAID THAT THEY HAD JUST COME FROM MEETINGS IN PARIS WITH PRIVATE ISRAELIS AND THAT THEY WERE SEEKING TWO THINGS: (A) TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH U.S. OFFICIALS, ESPECIALLY STATE DEPARTMENT; AND, (B) TO OPEN PLO INFORMATION OFFICE IN WASHINGTON. PLO REPS IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES AS BELONGING TO THE QUOTE MODERATE UNQUOTE WING OF THE MOVEMENT. IN RESPONSE, WE ASKED ONE OF THE PRIVATE AMERICANS THEY HAD CONTACTED TO REITERATE TO PLO REPS OUR OFFICIAL POSITION CONCERNING

CONTACT WITH PLO WHICH ISRAEL FAMILIAR WITH AND WHICH HAS NOT CHANGED. ATHERTON EMPHASIZED THAT THERE HAD BEEN AND WOULD BE NO REPEAT NO CONTACT BETWEEN STATE DEPARTMENT AND PLO REPS, AND THAT WE HAD MADE THIS MESSAGE CLEAR TO AMERICANS WITH WHOM WE DISCUSSED THE MATTER.

3. REGARDING INTENTION TO OPEN PLO OFFICE IN WASHINGTON, THERE WAS NOTHING USG COULD LEGALLY DO TO PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING PROVIDED INDIVIDUALS CONCERNED COMPLIED WITH REQUIREMENTS OF FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATION ACT. THESE REQUIREMENTS INCLUDED REGISTRATION WITH JUSTICE DEPARTMENT, SUBMITTING PERIODIC REPORTS ON ACTIVITIES TO JUSTICE, AND REQUIREMENT THAT STAFF OF OFFICE HAVE LEGAL STATUS UNDER OUR VISA LAWS. THIS WAS IN ESSENCE WHAT WE PASSED TO PRIVATE AMERICAN, WHO IN TURN RELAYED THIS TO THE TWO PLO REPRESENTATIVES.

4. ATHERTON SAID WE UNDERSTAND THAT PLO REPS HAVE HIRED LAWYER AND WITHIN PAST DAY OR TWO INITIATED FORMALITIES
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WITH JUSTICE FOR OPENING INFORMATION OFFICE. ATHERTON SAID THAT WE LEARNED FROM NYT REPORTER GWERTZMAN THAT STORY WILL APPEAR IN SATURDAY EDITION THAT PLO IS OPENING OFFICE IN WASHINGTON.

5. BAR-ON ASKED IF THERE WERE NOT SOME LEGAL WAY IN WHICH THIS COULD BE PREVENTED FROM HAPPENING, FOR EXAMPLE WERE THE REPRESENTATIVES LEGALLY IN THE U.S.? DID THEY

HAVE VALID VISAS? ATHERTON RESPONDED THAT WE WERE STILL TRYING TO DETERMINE PRECISELY WHAT THEIR STATUS IS. WHETHER THE PLO REPRESENTATIVE WHO INITIATED THE REGISTRATION OF THE OFFICE WITH JUSTICE CAN STAY AND RUN THE OFFICE IN WASHINGTON IS SOMETHING THAT WE DO NOT YET HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION TO DETERMINE. ATHERTON SAID THAT HE AGREED WITH BAR-ON THAT STORY WOULD CAUSE MUCH PUBLICITY BUT HE HOPED THAT GOI WOULD KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE SINCE THERE WAS NOTHING USG COULD DO LEGALLY TO PREVENT OFFICE FROM BEING OPENED PROVIDED IT COMPLIED WITH OUR LEGAL REQUIREMENTS. HE NOTED SUCH A PLO OFFICE ALREADY EXISTED IN NEW YORK.

6. BAR-ON RESPONDED THAT HE HAD JUST HEARD OF THIS STORY FROM REPORTERS, NAME MENTIONED OF ONE PLO REP WAS SABRI JURYIAS. HE WAS WITHOUT ANY REACTION FROM HIS GOVERNMENT AND COULD ONLY OFFER HIS PERSONAL VIEWS. HE SAID THAT THIS WAS A VERY SERIOUS MATTER WHICH WOULD CAUSE A GREAT DEAL OF CONCERN IN ISRAEL. HE VIEWED IT AS FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE PLO OFFICE IN NEW YORK WHICH, HE SAID, WAS ASSOCIATED WITH UN. ATHERTON POINTED OUT THAT PLO

OFFICE IN NEW YORK HAD BEEN THERE FOR YEARS, EVEN BEFORE PLO OBSERVER MISSION TO UN WAS ESTABLISHED, AND IT WAS OPENED ON SAME BASIS AS HE HAD EARLIER OUTLINED. BAR-ON SAID THERE WAS A FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE IN OFFICE BEING LOCATED IN WASHINGTON, AND BROUGHT UP CASE WHICH HAPPENED TWO YEARS AGO WHEN PLO TRIED TO OPEN OFFICE IN LONDON. HE SAID UK HAD NO LEGAL BASIS FOR PREVENTING OFFICE BUT IT MADE CLEAR TO PLO THAT THIS WAS UNDESIRABLE MOVE AND THAT SAFETY OF PLO REPS COULD NOT BE GUARANTEED. RESULT WAS THAT PLO OFFICE NEVER OPENED. ATHERTON RESPONDED THAT WE HAD CHECKED CAREFULLY FROM LEGAL POINT

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OF VIEW AND THAT THERE WAS NO WAY WE COULD PREVENT OPENING OF OFFICE PROVIDING IT COMPLIED WITH OUR LAWS AND THE INDIVIDUALS REPRESENTING OFFICE HAD LEGAL STATUS IN THE U.S. BAR-ON CONTINUED TO PROBE ABOUT HOW JURYIAS COULD HAVE COME HERE. ATHERTON SAID WE WERE STILL CHECKING THIS OUT AND THAT THIS WAS NOT THE END OF THIS ISSUE.

7. BAR-ON CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT HE VIEWED THIS AS MOST UNFORTUNATE AND THAT HE PERSONALLY BELIEVED IT WOULD BE VIEWED IN ISRAEL AS THE BEGINNING OF RECOGNITION BY USG OF PLO. ISRAELI PRESS WOULD MAKE MUCH OF THIS AND GOI WOULD BE FORCED TO REACT. ATHERTON SAID THAT WE REALIZED THAT PRESS INTEREST CANNOT BE HALTED; HOWEVER, WE HOPE THAT STORY IS NOT BLOWN OUT OF

PROPORTION AND WE HOPE THAT GOI WILL NOT OVER-REACT.

8. FYI: WE ARE IN TOUCH WITH JUSTICE ABOUT WHERE THE
PROCEDURES FOR THIS REGISTRATION ACTION STAND AND THE
SEPARATE QUESTION OF THE STATUS OF JURYIAS. KISSINGER
UNQTE: KISSINGER

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